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"The Nebraska-Kansas act does no more than give the force of law to the elementary principle of self government, declaring it to be the true intent and meaning of this act, not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States."

No doctrine ever more directly appealed to the popular heart. It was indeed the only question at stake in 1856. The people made everything subordinate to it. They saw in it a deliverance from those unhappy excitements which had for years disturbed the deliberations of Congress, unsettled the relations of business, and alienated one portion of the Union from the other.

Under his lead, inspired by his example, and controlled by his counsel, the campaign of 1856, in the State of Pennsylvania, was made upon the distinct issue in the Kansas-Nebraska bill, as follows: "That the Constitution and all laws of the United States which are not locally inapplicable, shall have the same force and effect in the said Territory of Nebraska as elsewhere within the United States, except the eighth section of the act 'preparatory to the admission of Missouri into the Union,' approved March 6, 1820, which being inconsistent with the principle of non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the States and Territories, as recognized by the legislation of 1850 commonly called the compromise measures, is hereby declared inoperative and void; it being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any State or Territory, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States."

So willingly were Mr. Buchanan's opinions accepted, and so obediently was his example followed, that every document written or published within the confines of Pennsylvania, on the issue involved, amplified his own original and undistorted understanding of it. The able and distinguished orators who traversed Pennsylvania during that struggle, either adopted his theory or generally abstained from coming into collision with it. Nothing but this concurrence of sentiment and of action rescued Pennsylvania from the Republicans, broke the force of the constantly recurring excitements in Congress and Kansas, and secured to us aid of thousands of conservative voters. The President adhered to his declarations till after his election, and inaugurated his administration by another pledge even more explicit and emphatic.

At this moment James Buchanan occupied a position which challenged the admiration and gratitude of his countrymen. No voice was raised in opposition to him. His Cabinet, chosen by himself, and unanimously confirmed by the Senate, was accepted by the country without a murmur. Men of all parties held out their hands to support and strengthen him. The Democracy, entrenched in every State in the Union, looked forward to a career of impregnable union and perpetual victory, and patriotic citizens regarded that great party as the only permanent political organization. The administration in good earnest, proceeded to select two of the ablest statesmen to proceed to Kansas to arrange a difficulty fully ripe and ready for settlement. Clothing these distinguished agents with full authority, and again repeating in their instructions his former assurances, Mr. Buchanan had nothing to do but to trust to time and to principle, and to turn his attention to other important questions. So carefully consisted was his course, up to a certain period in the year 1857, that he wrote the most pressing letters to Gov. Walker soliciting and urging him to stake everything upon the great doctrine of popular sovereignty, and to be well assured that the General Administration would stand or fall by that doctrine. Whoever shall write the history of these events, will find it difficult to reconcile such a series of commitments and pledges, such a succession of solemn assertions on the one side, with the sudden, startling and extraordinary change which took place in the minds of the President and his Cabinet before the assembling of the first session of the Thirty-fifth Congress. The change itself was a most disastrous calamity. It was a wanton sacrifice of honor and of good faith. It was a bold confession of insincerity and deception. It stamped the whole history of the great campaign of 1856 with ignominy, and confirmed the predictions of men who, during that year, had everywhere proclaimed that the professions of the Democracy were falsehoods, and that our thousand assurances that fair play should be secured in Kansas, were uttered only to be trampled under foot.

For a while heroic efforts were made to induce the administration to retrace its steps, and to recant its shameful recantation. But it had gone too far to retreat. Good Democrats everywhere deplored the surrender, but stood ready to support Mr. Buchanan and his Cabinet upon other portions of their policy. Feeling that the wound which had been inflicted by those whom they had clothed with power must be severe, these Democrats still trusted that it would not be fatal, and that time would heal the breach. Thus, while unable to sanction the desertion of principle themselves, they turned their attention to the preservation of harmony in the Democratic party, and, like true patriots, avoided indiscriminate warfare upon the General Administration. How was this magnanimity received by the guilty authors of this betrayal? With haughty and insolent scorn! Infatuated by the possession of power, and blind to consequences, they insisted that their own treachery into a substitute for the gospel of our political salvation, demanding that all men should be excluded from the Democratic party who did not fall down and worship the great crime of which they had been convicted. Hundreds of the purest and ablest patriots in the ranks of the Democratic party appealed for toleration, and implored to be permitted to remain true to their own pledges; but their appeals were rejected with disdain. The mercenaries of the administration were let loose upon them in every free State, as if they themselves had offended against the Democratic creed. They were denounced as disappointed men, charged with affiliating with Black Republicans, and refused admission into packed Conventions; and every man in office who would not combine in the crusade was at once removed.

The spectacle was then witnessed, for the first time in this country, of a deliberate interference, on the part of the General Government, with the rights of the States; of a deliberate war of a so-called Democratic Administration upon Democratic administrations; and of a deliberate organization by men in power to break down the principle that placed them in power. Other infamies followed in rapid succession. The South, tempted by the unjust proffer of turning a free Territory into a slave State, united forces with the Administration against those who had always been its friends. The ineffaceable proofs of the frauds by which this result was brought to be consummated were offered in vain to the consideration of the Administration leaders. Laughing the declarations of the people of Kansas against the Leecompton Constitution to scorn, they next invented the English bill, and made it another test of political orthodoxy. Conscious of the prejudices of the Northern people against slavery, they attempted to commit the Democratic organization to the monstrous idea that while thirty or forty thousand of a population were sufficient to constitute Kansas a slave State, under the Leecompton Constitution, ninety-three thousand would be exacted if the voice of the people prevailed in favor of a free State. The rules of the House of Representatives, the plainest of parliamentary usages, were overturned and defied, in order to complete the triumph of wrong; and an investigation, demanded alike by public opinion and by a majority of the popular branch, was defeated by the unworthy trick of those who happened to obtain the instrumentality of the Speaker to obtain the mastery of the committee.

Resistance to those wrongs became a duty as well as a necessity. We had to choose between absorption in the ranks of our political adversaries, or a bold organization against the vices of treacherous public servants. We feel that our whole action, though denounced by the General Administration, has been vindicated by the course of events and the ballot-box. Every accusation brought against the policy of converting Kansas, by unjust means, into a slave State, has been established, every point in the indictment of the General Administration has been made good. We have failed in no one particle of our testimony. The frauds which disgraced the rule of the minority in Kansas have not only been proved, but confessed by the instruments hired to fabricate them; and the justice of our position has at last reached the Southern heart. The voice of one of the ablest sons of South Carolina has been raised in denunciation of the course of the minority in Kansas, and of the crimes perpetrated by that minority and denounced by the Northern people. In the face of this record, has the Administration of James Buchanan been manly enough to admit its errors, and to arrest its proscription? No! with the accumulated evidence of the injustice of its own course, and of the singular integrity and truth of the man who have antagonized it, it refuses to perform the high duty of yielding to the force of facts. To punish those who have been right from the beginning, and to reward those whose only merit is in the fact that they have approved of its inconsistencies and wrongs is still the sublime mission to which it is dedicated.

We meet here to-day, however, not alone to protest against the past and present course of the federal Administration, but to vindicate the Democratic party of Pennsylvania, as against the assumptions and usurpations of a body, calling itself a Democratic Convention, which convened here on the 16th of March last. As if smitten by judicial blindness, an elaborate endorsement of practices condemned by the whole nation was followed by a deliberate insult to the Chief Magistrate of Pennsylvania. Silent only in reference to the treacheries and crimes of the Federal Administration, the Convention announced doctrines which, if not solemnly repudiated by the Democratic party, would deservedly sink it into infamous obscurity. Governor Packer, chosen in October of 1857, (and chosen as the personal friend of the President of the United States,) could never have been elected but for his early acceptance and eloquent championship of the great principles we are here to-day to rescue from reproach. During that contest, Governor Packer was sustained and assisted by the apparent sincerity and consistency of the General Administration and its agents on this question. The wise, just and conciliatory course of Governor Walker, backed, as he was then presumed to be, by the whole power of the President and his Cabinet, so strengthened our candidates with the people as to make them almost irresistible in their canvass. Theltd away before the arguments of Governor Packer and the great moral spectacle of an honest fulfillment of the pledges of 1856. Unhappily, at a later period, our public servants at Washington determined to abandon their impregnable position and to throw themselves into the arms of an adverse and fatal heresy. Governor Packer, like other American statesmen, profoundly and publicly committed as he was, could not, afterwards, follow the disreputable example set for him at the Federal Capitol; and, therefore, with every purpose of maintaining friendly relations with the General Administration, he found himself impelled, in moderate and dignified language, to re-assert his grateful attachment to the principles he had advocated in his campaign. There was no aggression in this; there was no purpose to come into collision with a vast official monopoly, extending its Briarist arms into every State, and fighting the people in their sanctuaries with their own money. His tone was the tone of respectful defence, and his whole bearing, from that day down to the period when he reiterated the sentiments uttered in his inaugural message, presented a marked contrast to the dogmatic despotism which arrogates to itself the control of parties and the alteration of creeds. But he had committed the inexpiable sin in refusing to accept the test offered to his lips by the President and his Cabinet, and the order was given, at once, that for this offence he was to be summarily and ignominiously punished. His friends were traduced and proscribed, and all communication severed between his Administration and that at Washington. Pensioned presses and paid officials united in the crusade; and at last a packed Convention formally repeated the orders of a perjured Administration, by joining in the most shameful attacks upon the private character of our Chief Magistrate. We are not here to apologise for or to defend Governor Packer; he must stand or fall by his works. But, regarding him, as we do, as a faithful and conscientious public servant, and as having well fulfilled the expectations of his constituents, we should be wanting in manhood if we did not express our admiration of the man and our confidence in the Chief Magistrate.

There is, in truth, but one course for us to pursue, and that is to reject all connection with men capable of such subservency and tyranny. The great leader of the North-western Democracy, tied to the policy of the Administration, would have been lost in an ocean of popular odium. Sectionalism would rule, not in the North alone, but in the whole Union, if we do not move against it. Let us then, continue to preserve the principles of our creed, and patiently wait for time and the ballot box to vindicate us. There is no permanent success for any party that does not stand where we stand to-day. If, from a handful of men, struggling against an Administration armed with almost imperial power, we have grown into a compact and commanding organization, unencumbered by, and disdainful of, patronage, relying only on the justice of our cause, so in the future must we conquer by the logical righteousness of our creed, and the manifest practicability of our remedies.

From the days of the American Revolution, and the Articles of Confederation, and the constitutional convention, down to the present hour, the patriot has always regarded with jealous eye the tendency of the Federal power to absorb the rights and interfere with the sovereignty of the States. Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison in 1798-99, both foresaw the evils that must flow from any such example, if not sternly checked upon the threshold. These great men took up arms against certain unconstitutional laws of Congress, and denounced them, after they had been signed by the President, as seizing the rights of the States and consolidating them in the hands of the General Government.—They all declared that this would be to surrender the form of government we have chosen, and to live under one depriving its powers from its own will and not from our authority. And Mr. Madison in the address prepared by him against the same unconstitutional laws, declared as follows: "Measures have already been adopted which may lead to these consequences. They consist: "In fiscal systems and arrangements, which keep a host of commercial and wealthy individuals embroiled and obedient to the mandates of the Treasury. "In armies and navies, which will on the one hand, enlist the tendency of man to pay homage to his fellow-creatures who can feed or honor him; and, on the other, employ the principle of fear, by punishing imaginary insurrections, under the pretext of preventive justice. "In swarms of officers, civil and military, who can inculcate political tenets tending to consolidation and monarchy, both by indulgence and severity; and can act as spies over the free exercise of human reason. "In restraining the freedom of the press, and investing the Executive with legislative, executive and judicial powers over a numerous body of men. "And that we may shorten the catalogue, in establishing by successive precedents, such a mode of construing the Constitution as will rapidly remove every restraint upon Federal power.

Let the history be consulted; let the man of experience reflect—nay, let the artificers of monarchy be asked what further materials they can need for building their favorite system?" More than sixty years have elapsed since these admonitions were uttered. What is the spectacle presented to-day? An attempt, on the part of the General Government, administered by men calling themselves Democrats, to usurp the rights of the States, to cripple the independence of the representative, to poison and pervert the elective franchise, to connive at the grossest infractions of law, to disregard those inappreciable lessons of frugality and economy in the administration of the Government, taught to us by the fathers of the republic, and by means of revenues swelled to an enormous amount, and aided by mercenaries in office in every State of the Union, to compel obedience to its tyrannical behests, and to cover its crimes with the name of the Democratic party.—Jefferson and Madison, early in this century, by their movement against a monarchical example, started and carried the great civil revolution of 1800, by recalling the people to a sense of the dangers which surrounded them, and by laying the foundation of Democratic principles deep and strong in the popular remembrance and regard. Inspired by a motive no less elevated, we appeal to the North and to the South against the despotism which has enthroned itself at Washington city, and which tramples under foot our most sacred rights; which has degraded the Northern States into mere subordinate corporations, controlled by a violent central consolidation; and which, after having contributed all in its power to paralyze the Democratic party in the North and North-west, by means of its proscription and its tests, its desertion of established principles, and its substitution of novel and tyrannical doctrines, has thrown itself into the arms of those who do not hesitate to declare on the floors of Congress, that unless slavery is protected in the Territories, by all the powers of the government, in defiance of the popular will, they are ready to break up the Union.

The theory of Congressional intervention, now adopted by the Administration leaders, must of necessity be a sectional theory. Endorsed by the Republican Convention of 1856, it must be abandoned by the Republicans in 1860. Repudiated by the Southern delegates in Cincinnati, in 1856, it is vain for the same men to attempt its endorsement in 1860. Whether asserted to protect slavery, or to prohibit slavery, we are equally against it. We propose to advocate and settle this question, forever by referring it to the people of the Territories, subject only to the Constitution of the United States. It is in vain to argue that this is not a practical remedy.—The history of the struggle in Kansas shows that it is practical; and, whatever courts may decide, nothing can prevent the triumph of the popular voice in the Territories, as well in regard to slavery as in reference to every other description of property. It is, therefore, too late for Southern politicians to abandon non-intervention, or for Northern politicians to oppose it. The whole history of our legislation is a vindication of this principle, recognized by Presidents, by Senators, by Representatives, by Federal and by State Courts, by North and by South. The cry from the South has always been, "Let us alone." The principle of non-intervention has never been seriously denied until the present moment. It is a fact to which we triumphantly refer, that with one or two exceptions, nearly all the present Southern leaders of the Democratic party have subscribed to this principle, preferring the ultimatum of a submission to the popular will in the Territories to that of Congress; and one of the most distinguished members, Mr. Toombs, of Georgia, stated in the great debate on the Kansas-Nebraska bill, in 1854, that which, if uttered by a Northern man, would have been regarded as a contemptuous defiance of the authority of the Supreme Court.

Popular Sovereignty and non-intervention are thus not only sanctioned by their inherent justice, by their coincidence with the past professions of the Democratic party, by their entire harmony with the doctrines of the Cincinnati platform, but also by the declarations of nearly every leading advocate of the Kansas-Nebraska bill; by the interpretation placed upon it by its author, as well as at the time it was originally introduced as in all subsequent discussions of its meaning; by James Buchanan, when he declared that the "people of a Territory, like those of a State, shall decide for themselves whether slavery shall or shall not exist within their limits;" by John C. Breckenridge, when he announced that the Democratic organization was pledged to prevent the interposition of Congress on the subject of slavery in the Territories, and that the people of each Territory should determine the question for themselves; by Gen. Cass; by Howell Cobb, when he declared at West Chester, in 1856, that he "would not plant slavery upon the soil of any portion of God's earth against the will of the people;" the Government of the United States should not force the institution of slavery upon people of the Territories or of the States, against the will of the people;" and when he announced in the same speech that "practically a majority of the people represented in the Territorial Legislature would decide the slavery question." "Whether they decide it by prohibiting it, according to the one doctrine, or by refusing to pass laws to protect it, as contended for by the other party, is immaterial. The majority of the people, by the action of the Territorial Legislature, will decide the question; and all must abide the decision which is made;"—by Hon. James L. Orr, speaker of the late House of Representatives, when he declared that "if the majority of the people are opposed to the institution, and if they do not desire it engrafted upon their territory, all they have to do is simply to decline to pass laws in the Territorial Legislature for its protection and then it is as well excluded as if the power was invested in the Territorial Legislature to prohibit it;" by Hon. A. H. Stephens when he said "I am willing that the Territorial Legislature may act upon the subject when and how they think proper;" by hundreds of other prominent members of the Democratic party, whose declarations in support of the principles we have met this day to reassert would fill volumes.

There is no well-settled Democratic principle which we are not willing to adopt and eager to defend. We yield unflinching obedience to the great principle of self-government which underlies our institutions, and forms the corner-stone of Democracy. No man who is faithless to this—no matter by what name he may be called—can justly be considered a Democrat; and we will be as unyielding and exacting in our endorsements of this vital doctrine as its importance requires. We agree with Jefferson in appreciating the importance of an economical administration of the Government, and for that reason do not hesitate to denounce the fearful extravagance which has been sanctioned by unfaithful public servants. We also believe with him that one of the surest preventives against the establishment of despotism is the preservation of strength of local Governments from the encroachments of Federal power; and, therefore, we protest against the covert attack made upon the Governor of Pennsylvania by the pensioned agents of the National Administration, on account of his manliness in rebuking its dependants, and denouncing the persistent efforts which have been made to control the politics of the country by the skillful use of the patronage and money of the Federal Government. We agree with Jackson, that "the Federal Union must and shall be preserved;" and therefore we seek to advance principles which should command the confidence and deserve the support of the people of all sections of the Union, and shun with abhorrence the ultraisms of sectionalists of the South and of the North. Warned by the experience of the past two years of the imminent danger which threatens the vital principles of the Democratic party if it is to be entirely surrendered to the control of Southern sectionalists and corrupt Administrations, we protest against their action in decided terms, and will sternly resist alike the demand, made in defiance of the pledged faith of the Democratic party, for the interference of the Federal Government to protect or force slavery into Territories against the will of their inhabitants, and the clamors for the exclusion of slavery within them by Congressional action, and for an enforced similarity in the institutions of all the States through the exercise of Federal influences. While we have no antipathy against the people of the South, and are ready to do our utmost to preserve and strengthen every Constitutional guarantee they possess, we are equally determined to defend to the uttermost the rights of the people of the North, and the rights of the settlers of the Territories to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way. The past history of the Democratic party has been such as to inspire us with a hope that, if its movements are characterized by proper wisdom and forbearance, it may again command itself to the confidence of the nation. But this can never be done, if it is to be committed to Southern ultraists; if it is to be a mere sectional organization for the advancement and protection of the interests of slavery in defiance of the vital principles of free Government, and if the Democracy of the North are to be forced into a position revolting to the judgment and patriotism of the people of the free States.

Every observer of the events of the last two momentous years cannot fail to perceive that the disunion sentiment has been greatly strengthened in the Southern States by the policy of the Federal Administration. Encouraged by this policy, the extreme men of the South have not only abandoned the accepted creed of the Democratic party, but make the acceptance of their new sectional platform the condition of their co-operation with the party, and even of their continuance in the Union. The very last movement in the South indicates the formation of a Southern party in contra-distinction to the Republican organization of the North; and the Charleston Mercury, the organ of the extremists, announces that "the Democratic party exists only in the South," and "that it is a Southern party and nothing else." If these preparations indicate anything, they assuredly mean that the day is rapidly approaching so much dreaded by the Father of his Country, and that henceforth this happy confederacy will be divided into geographical parties, each intent upon its own interests, and each the infuriated foe of the other. There can be no union of these States upon a sectional platform. We must stand together on constitutional principles, or surrender the Republic to incurable divisions. We are here, also, as law-obeying Democrats. We desire to be understood as upholding the principles of the Federal Constitution, and the statute laws enacted under them, and of resisting those who are violating them. We are here to call upon every citizen to assist us in maintaining the Constitution and the laws as they are, and to declare that there is no higher law, North or South, which can justify any man in doing violence to either. We arraign the Federal Administration as the worst enemy the Federal Constitution has ever had, as having attempted to weaken that instrument in the affections of the people by allowing the laws enacted to carry out its provisions, to be wrested from their true meaning, or to be ruthlessly violated. We arraign that Administration for establishing a precedent by which the money of the people is to be used to corrupt the elections in utter disregard of law. We arraign it for its unconstitutional war upon State rights and State equality; for its assaults upon the independence of the representatives of the people in Congress assembled; for its despotic proscription of men for opinion's sake; for the absence of frugality and integrity in its departments; for its guilty proffers of bribes to a portion of its own people, as well as to those of a distant foreign government; and, finally, for bringing the game of our Republic into disgrace and shame before the nations of the earth. And all these, not merely without law, but against law; not merely without warrant from the Constitution, but in deliberate violation of its letter and spirit. Our duty in such an emergency rises above a mere party duty. It is a far more sacred impulse and conviction that compels us to come forward to protest against vice and aggression which must overthrow the liberties of the people, and add another failure to the long procession of extinct republics, unless averted at once and forever. We are unwilling that the enemies of this Union, either in this or in other lands, should hold the American people responsible for these excesses; or that the enemies of the Democratic party should make that party responsible for the manifold transgressions of those who have betrayed its principles.

In the name of both, we protest against any such accusation. We may be stigmatized as rebels by purchased politicians and vocal newspapers; but if we can rescue the